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A CANTONESE VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION:
A CASE STUDY OF SAM SUI WUI KWON
IN MALACCA.

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BAGI MEMPENUHI SEBAHAGIAN
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SYNOPSIS

This research project is a study of the Sam Sui Wui kwoon in Malacca, i.e. a Cantonese clan association. The main purpose is to get a clearer insight into the position of the association in Malacca today and to look into the progress/development or decline of the activities of the association.

I begin this graduation exercise by discussing the objective and scope of the research and difficulties encountered in the course of the fieldwork, the basic concept of a voluntary association and the origin of Chinese association. A short history of the establishment of the Chinese voluntary associations in Malaysia and also their functions at that time are also dealt with in this chapter. Kenneth Little's findings on West African voluntary association are summarized here and put forward for application, to the Chinese voluntary association in the Malaysian context, with special reference to Sam Sui Wui Kwon.

The second chapter touches on some of the pertinent issues pertaining to the Sam Sui Wui Kwoon. The historical background of the Sam Sui Chinese, their settlement in Malacca and also the humble beginnings of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon are presented. Apart from that, the objective, constitution and regulations, organization

and financial standing of the association are also explained at full length.

The present stage of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon with regards to its activities, functions and membership is discussed and elaborated in Chapter Three.

Following this, the fourth chapter encumbers part of the field findings and attempt is made to evaluate the present status, functions and membership of the Sam Sui Wui Kwoon. The opinions of the respondents, especially with regards to the reasons for their non-membership are presented here. In comparison, the activities of Heng Ann Huay Kuan are briefly mentioned.

I then proceed to summarize and analyse the findings of this case study to see whether or not Kenneth Little's conclusion regarding the voluntary associations in West Africa is applicable in a Malaysian context. At the end of this last chapter, I forward some suggestions to improve the Sam Sui Wui Kwoon.

SIPNOSIS

Penyelidikan projek ini ialah satu kajian Sam Sui Wui Kwoon di Melaka, ia-itu, satu persatuan Klan Cantonese. Tujuan utamanya ialah untuk menilai secara terperinci kedudukan persatuan tersebut di Melaka pada hari ini, khususnya dalam aspek aktiviti-aktiviti yang dijalankan.

Saya mulakan latihan ilmiah ini dengan bincangkan objektif dan skop penyelidikan, masalah-masalah yang ditemui semasa menjalankan lapangan kajian dan konsep asas sesebuah persatuan sukarela dan origin persatuan orang Cina. Sejarah penubuhan persatuan sukarela orang Cina di Malaysia dan fungsi-fungsinya pada masa itu juga dihuraikan. Kajian Kenneth Little mengenai persatuan-persatuan sukarela di Afrika Barat juga dirumuskan dan diaplikasikan kepada persatuan sukarela orang Cina dalam konteks Malaysia, khususnya kepada Sam Sui Wui Kwoon.

Bab Kedua menerangkan beberapa isu penting mengenai Sam Sui Wui Kwoon. Latarbelakang sejarah orang Cina Sam Sui, penetapan mereka di Melaka dan juga sejarah awal penubuhan Sam Sui Wui Kwoon dimasukkan. Selain daripada itu, objektif, perlembagaan dan undang-undang organisasi dan kedudukan kewangan persatuan ini juga diterangkan dengan lebih lanjut.

Keadaan Sam Sui Wui Kwoon hari ini, terutamanya aktiviti-aktiviti, fungsi-fungsi dan keahlian diterangkan secara mendalam dalam Bab Ketiga.

Berikutan ini, dalam Bab Keempat dijelaskan mengenai penemuan-penemuan kajian lapangan dan evaluasi status sekarang, fungsi dan keahlian Sam Sui Wui Kwoon. Pendapat responden terutama sekali yang tidak memasuki persatuan dalam hal sebab-sebab mereka tidak mendaftarkan diri sebagai ahli dibentangkan di sini. Secara bandingan, aktiviti-aktiviti Heng Ann Huay Kuan di bincangkan secara ringkas.

Selanjutnya, saya buat rumusan dan menganalisa penemuan-penemuan kajian kes ini untuk lihat samada kesimpulan Kenneth Little Little mengenai persatuan sukarela di Afrika dapat diaplikasikan dalam konteks Malaysia. Saya mungakhiri Bab ini dengan memberi beberapa cadangan untuk memperbaiki Sam Sui Wui Kwoon.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

There is a saying in South East China, "out of every ten people who go abroad, three die, six remain and only one comes home." (T'ien, 1953:2). There is truth in this saying as we can see many overseas Chinese all over the world especially in South East Asia.

During the late 19th and early 20th Century, the trend amongst emigrants were to make a fortune abroad in order to enrich their native lineages and also to ensure a comfortable retirement on their return. Since they were living away from their home land, there arose a natural need for them to organize some kinds of institution to undertake special tasks to help co-ordinate economic activity and provide the "esprit de corp" within which their social life might generally be regulated. As a result of such institution, the Chinese were able to maintain their 'Chineseness'.

At the turn of the century (but in parts of Indo China only after 1945) the Nanyang Chinese i.e. those Chinese immigrants in South East Asia began to form a plethora of voluntary association which is characteristic of their society today. As the Chinese abroad become real 'communities' their kind of life provided the most vital area of political arrangement, community-centred activity for the Chinese in the Nanyang. (Wang, 1970: 1-30). This was why it was only natural for the

overseas Chinese to be members of these associations and it is a typical feature of immigrant Chinese communities everywhere. (T'ien 1953; Skinner, 1957).

The Chinese Voluntary Associations in Malaysia are categorized into clan, district and dialect associations. These groups organized according to surname or place of origin in China are regarded as vestiges of traditional allegiances which will die along with the immigrants who originally, used and supported them. Many of the functions originally performed by these associations ended when the flow of Chinese immigrants to Malaysia ceased. Originally, their major activities included the management of temples, cemeteries, schools, medical institutions and transit houses for members. (Kwok, 1954). They also housed and fed new immigrants, helped them find jobs and made them feel at ease with the wider community. Whenever there arose any disputes among the clansmen, the association played the role as a mediator. In other words, these associations provided many new immigrants with a niche in an unfamiliar society. (Freedman, 1960:25-48, Kwok, op. cit: 26-39).

1.1. Objective and scope of the research

This is an attempt to study one of those Chinese associations (wui kwoon) in Malacca. Research done on the characteristics, organization and functions of Chinese Clan Associations in general have only

been few and far between. The few research works that were done by the undergraduates of the local universities as part of the requirement for their degrees. They include Low Lai Sheong (1976/77) who studied the Chinese associations in Kuala Lumpur, Chew Chiew Leng (1983/84) who studied the Chinese clan association in Negeri Sembilan with special reference to the Keng Chew Association and Lee Wai Leng who looked into the structure and function of Cantonese Voluntary Associations in Kuala Lumpur (1983/84). Besides these graduation exercises, there is also a paper by Sharon A. Carstens entitled Chinese Associations in Singapore society and Stephen A. Douglas and Paul Pederson who touched on the same subject in Blood, Believer and Brother: The development of voluntary associations in Malaysia. Other than these two works there have not been much material as regards the Chinese Associations. A brief overview of societies in Malaysia reveals that the Chinese are strongest in the traditional kongsi and wui kwoon. However, it is evident that since the 1960s these kongsis and wui kwoons have declined in their appeal to the Chinese community. It was for this purpose that this study was thought to be particularly worthwhile.

This study begins by looking at the role played by voluntary associations in general especially those in West Africa. This research seeks to explore the functions, structure and significances which the Chinese clan association holds for present day Malaysian Chinese. The

objective here is to see if Little's views as discussed in Section 1.2 of the function of voluntary associations in West Africa could be applied to the Malaysian context.

In the functional aspect of the association, I will see if it still substitutes for the extended family, for the economic support available at home and also for the social aspect. This study is confined to the Sam Wui Kwoon with a little cross reference to the Heng Ann Association. Although an indepth study of the other associations in and around Malacca would be desirable to see a clearer picture which is more representative of the local associations with regards to Little's study in West Africa, this is not attempted in view of the lack of time and the absence of co-workers. However, it is hoped that this association will be, to some extent, a representative of other associations and that a better understanding of the Chinese associations will result from the findings.

Sam Sui Kwoon (SSWK) was chosen for various reasons. This association is located in town which is about two miles from my home and accessability into the assocaition would not be much of a problem as my uncle is one of the committee members.

Linguistic affiliation is another reason. As a Chinese, I was able to allay the suspicions of the members of the association. Being able to converse in the Cantonese dialect, I was able to build a rapport with the respondents and make them feel at ease. They

confided in me more easily as I am a person of their own race and dialect group.

1.2. Review of literature related to the objective and the aim of the study.

In studies related to the voluntary associations, Kenneth Little's work is often used as a theoretical framework. Kenneth Little, in his studies of the voluntary associations in West Africa suggested that the social changes resulting from cultural contact can be seen as an historical process of adaptation to new conditions. Adaptation in the present context implies not only the modification of the social institutions, but their development to meet the demands of an industrial economy and urban way of life.

Urbanization and western contact have created new social and psychological needs and aspirations impossible to satisfy in the countryside. Thus, men and women are lured to the towns and to places where money can be earned to pay taxes, to provide bride-wealth and also to buy manufactured goods and appliances. This have led to the establishment of voluntary associations as adaptive mechanism to the new circumstances and surrounding environment which are in contrast to those in the traditional places.

Table 1.1 Type of associations and their specific functions.

<u>Type of association</u>	<u>Functions</u>
1. Tribal association	Provide members with mutual aid, including support while out of work, sympathy and financial assistance in the case of illness and the responsibility for the funeral and the repatriation of the family of the deceased in the case of death.
2. Friendly association	provide funeral benefits, charity and helping its members to save.
3. Occupational association	concerned with the status and remuneration of their members as workers - maintain a reasonable standard of work in the craft, determines the rules of apprenticeship; fix prices of workmanship and settle disputes whether between master and apprentice or between craftsmen and customer.
4. Entertainment and recreational	primary for amusement and entertainment - dancing, singing, games, etc.

Source: Kenneth Little: West African Urbanization - A Study of Voluntary Associations in Social Change. Cambridge University Press 1965.

As Kenneth Little did his study in the voluntary associations in West Africa, I would like to apply his findings to the Chinese Clan Association in the Malaysian context to see whether or not it is relevant. In addition, I would also like to see the validity of some generalised statements made by some writers such as Ohki, 1967:5 who said that 'the Chinese culture is highly resistant to being worn down by other cultures during the acculturation process' and Mallory, 1956: 258 is of the opinion that 'the amazing loyalty of the Chinese to their language and social customs and hold firmly to them'. With reference to the above statements, I will try to identify some socio-economic factors which hinder or encourage the development of the Chinese clan associations.

1.3 Basic Concepts

What is a Voluntary Association?

It is evident that overseas Chinese communities throughout the world are noted for the number and variety of their voluntary associations. (Cheng. 1950:10, Freedman 1960a:38-39, Crissman, 1967: 194, Heidhues 1974:49). These associations exist in all areas of social life and make up the internal structure of the Chinese community.

Hsieh Jiann (1978:193) defined a voluntary association with certain characteristics:-

- i) It is a formal organization which its members deliberately founded to pursue specific goals.

- ii) Membership is voluntary, being neither forced nor prescribed.
- iii) It is not the primary source of livelihood for its individual members.
- iv) It does not produce goods or services for non-members; i.e. a non-profit making organization.
- v) It is private and owned by its members only.
- vi) Except for its secretary, all members and elected officials of the organization are not salaried.

It is important to note that despite the fact that membership in a clan, surname or locality association may be prescribed, a person only becomes a member of a particular association officially when he or she willingly abides by the rules of the association. Every person has every right to refrain from becoming a member of an association if he does not want to.

There are various names used for the overseas Chinese associations, depending on the goals, legal status, functional needs and structural characteristics. (Freedman 1960:38-42), Chrissman 1967:194, Heidhues 1974:48-54, Gamba 1966:131-134 Newell 1962:123-124, Nyce 1973: 119-126) For example, Gamba (1966:133) classified associations based on the kinship principle into two categories - surnames associations and clan association without any differences between them. On the other hand, Freedman (1960:40) made no difference when he referred to the 'territorial group' and the 'dialect group'

1.4. The origins of the Chinese Association

In China the associations were originally formed to co-ordinate economic activity and provide the grouping within which social life might generally be regulated. Its rituals and teachings have many resemblances to freemasonry. These helped in enriching the fellowship and relationship (Lin Lok Kam Ching) of the fellow-members who usually were government officers who worked in places away from home and businessmen who travelled quite a bit to do business transactions.

The first wui kwoon that was established in China was in Yung Lo's time (1403-1424) in Peking by officers from the Wuhu district in the Province of Anhui. Only officers from the Wuhu district were allowed to be members. In 1560, another wui kwoon was built by Shexian businessmen in the Huizhou prefecture in the south of Anhui. Everyone was welcomed to be a member then. These two associations were the catalyst in the formation of such associations. By the 19th century, in Peking itself, there were approximately 400 Wui Kwoons. Wui Kwoons which only welcomed businessmen and apprentices as members are known as guilds.

The Wui Kwoon set-up is closely linked with migration. In China, students are required to take their external exam in Peking and it was for this purpose, associations were built to provide a temporary place of accommodation for them.

Besides this, officers who were usually transferred to other places were able to keep in touch with their kinsfolk and clansmen

through these associations as they were places for social gatherings. Thus it can be said that whenever migration and resettlement occurred, associations were set up.

When the Chinese began to migrate and resettle in South East Asia, naturally they created an internal structure which can be equated to Wui Kwoon. Hsieh Jiann (1978:193) have given various factors related to the formation of Wui Kwoons in Singapore and Malaysia:-

a. The need for institutionalized ties between the ruling and the ruled. Upon their arrival in Singapore and Malaya, the Chinese found themselves in a dilemma; whether to belong to the British or the indigenous groups. They did not have any reliable institutionalized ties with the indigenous community. So they came under the protection of the established colonial authority. However, they built their own internal structure, a network of voluntary associations based on kinship, locality, dialects and occupation as an autonomous apparatus for social control. Through these associations the Chinese were able to settle their private affairs and they ruled indirectly.

b. The need for authority to mitigate class conflicts within the stratified community. The Chinese immigrants had originally intended to earn enough to return to China as wealthy men. They worked very hard in order to achieve their goals. During the British Colonial administration (1819-1877) these Chinese adopted a division of labour according to their dialects. (Purcell 1948:61, Hodder 1953:30), Song 1923:11-12). The Hokkiens were merchants, the Cantonese were machine-

shop proprietors, the Hakkas, farmers. This caused class conflicts among them. From inscriptions on corner stones or monuments of different associations, we know that attempts had been made to mitigate these conflicts within them. (Wu 1975:I:47-48, Chen and Tan 1970:220).

d. The need for a network of interdependent relationship for new immigrants in the foreign land. Almost all the Chinese immigrants were very home-oriented people and considered themselves as 'sojourners' thinking always of returning to their ancestral homes one day. Consequently, they did not have any feeling of identity to their foster home. The association helped them in adapting themselves in the foreign land in the absence of a traditional socio-cultural system.

In Malaysia, Chinese voluntary associations are known as Wui Kwoon (hoey, hoe, hwi, hue, huay) according to dialect or caprice of romanization. In other countries in South East Asia, indigeneous terms are used to describe these voluntary associations and also the heads.

- i) in Manila - the gremio is headed by a gobernadorcillo de Chinos.
- ii) in Indochina - the congregation under a chef (under the Cambodian monarchy a chautea).
- iii) in Indonesia - kongkoans
- iv) in Singapore - hui kuan
- v) in Thailand - the earliest association did not call themselves hui Kuan because all regularly established associations were suspected by the government. The Cantonese used pieh-shu

'villa' and the Hainanese kung-so - 'public meeting place'. Then after the Secret Societies Act of 1897 proved ineffective, the name hui kuan was officially used.

Chinese voluntary associations are categorised according to the nature of their membership to people of a particular village (place of origin), district or dialect in China. However, this is not strictly adhered to as these associations do not cut across dialect lines. Dialect associations are usually opened to all members who are of a specific dialect. For example, Fui Chew Association in Malacca welcomes anyone who is of the Hoi Look Fong dialect to be a member. In this case, his place of origin is not considered at all.

Clan, district and dialect associations can be regarded as more popular with the Chinese community in South East Asia today, inclusive of Malaysia. However, they are often criticised for their clannishness and their ties with past traditions which are said to have no relevance for our modern society. This could be explained by the Chinese being China-oriented and they always wanted to preserve their Chineseness where ever they went. Consolidation amidst them is highly regarded and this implies common sentiment, mutual concern and spirit of solidarity. However, this is not very applicable as the clan rules aim at an ideal type of personality so closely and exclusively orientated to the family and the clan that he can hardly be expected to play an active role in community life, let alone political matters.

1.5. Establishment of the Chinese Voluntary association in Malaysia

A Brief Picture

The overseas Chinese were almost exclusively drawn from the South-eastern provinces of Kwantung, Fukien and Kwangsi - the great majority from the first two. There were various factors causing this. Chinese history record a great many huge famines and floods. According to the Ching government records there was a famine in 1335 in which 13,000,000 perished. In the Chia Ching period (1521-1566) the worn-out state of much of the soil of China became undeniable: famine ravaged the provinces of Honan and Shensi where the poor lived on grass for years; the hungry wanderers loitered in the roads whereas the dead bodies were everywhere. Floods, draughts, cold and famines - such natural calamities played vital roles in forcing the people to emigrate.

Chinese population increased wildly but the land was still not extensively cultivated. This meant that the number of mouths to be fed increased and as a result the poor have no means of earning a living. Besides these two factors, a subordinate misfortune for China especially during the reign of the first Manchu emperor was that the Manchu government treated the Chinese very harshly. They cut off the supplies, denuded the crops and burned down the villages.

Foreign trade brought great profits and induced the Chinese to make trade voyages. However, under the Mings, immigration had not been very considerable, but it increased in the eighteenth century.

This was because the English colonial government encouraged industrialization in Malaya then. The native and local Malays were not able to meet the rising demands for such rapid progress. They would rather engage themselves in subsistence agriculture. Therefore, the colonial powers had no choice but to turn to the Chinese and Indian for the labour force for the industrialization. This together with the push factors stated above lured the Chinese to migrate to Malaysia.

The Chinese immigrants were referred to as "hua-chiaos" a term which emerged in the 1890s, which when used is normally translated as 'the Chinese sojourners overseas' Chiao means a journey or a temporary stay. This term retained the sense of temporariness, so the local Chinese in Malaysia today either call themselves hua-jen or hua-i (descendants of Chinese) or Ma-hua (Malaysia Chinese).

Being a Chinese is, in Malaysia, essentially a matter of self-identification. Living under an entirely new and foreign civilization, the Chinese immigrants instinctively looked to their own countrymen for assistance and protection in times of distress or when prosecuted by the authorities and so long as these intermediaries are not publicly acknowledged they must work in the dark to the detriment of good government. An 'imperium in imperio' should never be tacitly tolerated, but as soon as necessity and naturalness are clearly demonstrated it should be incorporated into the public body. Despite the fact that they wanted to be incorporated into the public

body, it must be made clear that the Chinese held very closely their Chinese tradition so as to maintain their Chineseness. On their arrival to Malaysia, the Chinese needed urgently an organization to help them adapt themselves to the entirely new and strange environment and also to help them to be in constant contact with their home and kinfolk in China. In other words, these associations provided many new immigrants with a niche in an unfamiliar society.

(Freedman, 1960:25-48).

Other than this factor, the wui kwoon was desired because British at that time refused to integrate the Chinese into the local society. In this aspect, the wui kwoon fought for their rights and before long they became indispensable.

It is believed that the first Wui Kwoon was established in 1801, after the foundation of Penang. Blythe (1969:54) said that by 1825, there were already seven Chinese organization: of which three were secret societies and four were Wui Kwoons. In the early stage, the authorities were contained to govern the Chinese community through the societal hierarchy thereby consolidating the political power of the societies. The British found this form of indirect rule more convenient and efficient than getting involved with the complicated affairs of the Chinese community. Actually, there is a distinction between these Wui Kwoons and the dangerous secret societies. The secret societies were the cause of many riots, robberies, extortions and

murders but the government was very slow in dealing with this kind of disease of the Chinese community. However, realising this weakness, the 'Bill for the Better Preservation of the Peace' was passed in 1865 empowering the Governor to suspend normal legal procedures and substitute emergency powers to pacify or prevent riots. Until 1870, the Government policy sought to suppress dangerous societies. This policy has continued virtually uninterrupted to the present day.

Through the Ordinance XIX of 1869, an Ordinance of the Suppression of Dangerous Societies - every society of more than ten persons other than joint-stock companies and free masons must be registered with the Commissioner of Police, giving details of names, objects, place of business and names of headmen. The governor could act against illegal or potentially dangerous societies by requiring more information, enforcing bonds upon office-bearers or refusing registration.

William Pickering, the first official Chinese interpreter and 'Protector of Chinese' in 1872 feared that total suppression by the government would alienate over 165,000 registered members of secret societies and managers of about 300 'friendly' societies. He suggested an effective alternative as it would be dangerous to dissolve these societies; i.e. those societies designated for 'Recreation, Charity, Religion and Literature' be exempted.

Following the official suppression of secret societies, the number of Wui Kwoons applying for registration increased rapidly. The first established Wui Kwoon was the Jiaying Hui Kuan in Penang in 1801 by the Hakka group from the Jiaying District in the Northern Province of Kwantung. The second Wui Kwoon was built in Rasah, Negeri Sembilan - Mei Jiang Wu Shu Hui Kuan.

1.6 Functions of the Wui Kwoon in the past

The clan is the consolidating group which maintains an organizational bond between members of common descent who are no longer in the same family. It should go on forever, though the fact is often otherwise. A clan can last as long as it functions properly with an effective organization, some amount of common property, observe the regular ancestral rituals, take care of the clan welfare (reward and relief), control its members' conduct toward one another.

Many of the above stated functions were originally performed by the clan associations but when the flow of Chinese immigrants ceased, the associations simultaneously declined in their original functions. Being an organization of the Chinese, by the Chinese and for the Chinese, the functions were administered mainly for the welfare of the Chinese. The various functions were as follows:-

1. Ancestral rites are the principle means of promoting clan cohesion.

These are memorial services at which all members express their gratitude to the ancestors. The worship of ancestors hinges on the moral duty of hsiao "filial piety". This function is observed faithfully as the Chinese believes that the spirits of the ancestors are capable of causing good future or disaster to their descendants. (Lih: 1976 and Tan, 1983;182). Filial piety is manifested in the Song of Revolution (Wang:1981;126) exhorting the fellow Chinese to esteem highly their ancestors:-

".....What then is the most shameful matter?

To forget one's ancestors involves the greatest hate,

If not that, to register as a foreign national

Forgetting that you come from Chinese stock

In life, you may gain an awesome fame

After death how can you face your ancestors.....?

According to the clan rules, sacrifices are offered on the birthdays and death anniversaries of the ancestors four or more generations ago, during the New Year holidays and on festive days. The associations pay particular attention to the spring rites at Ching Ming (Chinese All Souls Day) and autumn or winter rites during the Chung Yuan, i.e. the 15th seventh month of the Chinese Calendar. The members would gather together at the tombstone erected in the cemetery in honour of the clan's ancestors. In the association premises, there usually is an ancestral hall (tong) with ancestral tablet.

(shengzu pai). A caretaker who was probably a poor member lodges free in a part of the building, would offer incense before the tablest.

2. Associations also organized social gatherings, provided mutual help and organized benevolent fund. Social gatherings were usually organized during the Chinese New Year and also on the anniversaries of the association. This was very vital as when the clan members multiplied, they became more segregated and neglected to greet one another even at the time of mourning and celebration. They seemed to forget their blood relationship and definitely lose the spirit of mutuality. These social gatherings, were hoped to bring them together again. Benevolent fund was in the form of regular relief rations specially for the poor, unemployment, poor widows and orphans, aged widows without family support and also for the disabled and invalid members. There was also the death benefit fund where an amount of money would be given to the family of the deceased. Besides these, other benefits may include the loan of funeral banners, the provision of a small funeral band, the loan of a truck to transport the coffin and mourners to the cemenry.

3. Associations provided a place of temporary shelter for the sick, unemployed and also those newly arrived immigrants. The sick who did not have a place to recuperate were allowed to stay in the association premises free of charge. This is known as 'tou leong'.

4. For the unemployed, the association was an employment agency. This was possible because members of the particular association who knew about any job vacancies would inform this 'bureau'. All unemployed members of that association who needed jobs registered themselves there. whenever information about suitable jobs for them arose, they would be contacted immediately.

(shengzu pai). A caretaker who was probably a poor member lodges free in a part of the building, would offer incense before the tablest.

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5. Disputes among clansmen were very common in the past but those were usually reconciliated by the association. In this sense, the association served as an arbitrator.
6. Connections with temples were prevalent. It was believed that older associations frequently began with a group of clan brothers or men from the same district erecting a temple to their local Chinese deity. Later, temples went under the care of the association.
7. Stressing and encouraging education among the members was a special feature of the associations. Thus, it was natural that associations ran schools. For instance the Hing Ann Huay Kuan in Singapore started the Hong Wen School in 1920. Since the time it was founded, the Hong Wen School has now attained 64 years of glorious history. (The Hong Wen School Annual Magazine, 1984).
8. Social functions such as the legalising of marriages according to Chinese rites and attending to clansmen's funeral rites were also performed.
9. The associations also played the role as bureaus for those seeking information on kins and events in China. These findings are consistent with those of Carstens (1975), Skinner (1957), Tien (1967) and Topley (1967).
10. Associations provided the means whereby clan members met and reinforced ties among themselves. They would go there to relax, read newspapers, chit-chat and even play a game of mahjong and 'tin kau' (a kind of Chinese game).

Thus, the wui kwoons played a vital role in the economic and social life of the Chinese in the past especially during the period of large immigration influx; that is during the late 19th Century.

1.7. Research Methodology

This study was based on five months of research in Malacca which involved observation, key-informant interview, interviews that are structured and unstructured, questionnaires and the collection of data and documents and a review of research essays which has been conducted by third year students in the University of Malaya.

Questionnaires were administered to each respondents from the Sam Sui clan. The questionnaires dealt with the following issues:-

- the respondent's personal background.
- reason for being a member/non-member.
- condition of the association.
- benefits received from the association.
- activities and functions of the association in which the respondents are involved.
- has the association achieved its objectives?

During my observation period, I tried to immerse in the activities of the association, joining in everyone of their functions which were either social or religious or cultural in nature. The important events I participated in were the Ching Ming Festival, (day of visiting their ancestor's tomb) the giving out of scholarships to students who did well

in their academic studies and the annual dinner of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon. While participant observation was an important means for collecting information, I also interviewed 50 respondents and 4 key-informants.

In addition, I also studied whatever scarce documents and literature the association has. Government officers from the Registrar of Societies were also consulted but they were of little help as the Government does not exert control over the activities of the association. The association needs to send in a report of their activities annually to the department concerned. After collecting the necessary data, further readings on the subject were carried out in the library in the University of Malaya.

Using the random sampling method, I conducted a study comprising 50 respondents; 25 of which are members and 25 non-members and 4 key-informants were interviewed. They are the president, secretary, treasurer and the clerk of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon. The president and Youth Section leader of the Heng Ann Association were also interviewed for cross-reference purposes.

Originally, there was an attempt to find out the number of Sam Sui Chinese in Malacca so that it can be safely regarded that 50 Sam Sui Chinese respondents are adequate to represent the Sam Sui Chinese clan. However, this is an impossible task as there is no record in any government department or even in the Sam Sui Wui Kwoon. So, the small sample size does not permit generalization across Malaysia as a whole. Thus any conclusions with regards to this specific association does not necessary apply for the other clan associations.

1.8 Difficulties Encountered

i. Time Constraint.

Time factor remains as one of the big problems faced. Most of my respondents were busy with their work when I approached them for an interview, with a few exceptions for example, the few elderly women who were free from household chores and other responsibilities. Interviewing the busy ones for more than half an hour or so could jeopardize the 'relatively good' impression they had of me and this would cause them to be unwilling to give me information which could be of great help in my study. Moreover, in such a short period of time, I could hardly establish any deep personal ties. Thus, intimate data could not be gathered.

I sensed the urgency of time especially when officials and those concerned respondents did not turn up for the appointments made.

ii. Dialects

Although I am quite fluent in the Cantonese dialect, I must admit that many a time I had difficulty in communicating and expressing what I wanted to say to my respondents. Basically, it was because the meaning of certain technical words would get distorted when they were translated from English to Chinese. Since I am not Chinese educated, I could not comprehend some Cantonese terms. Besides this, the Cantonese which the Sam Sui Chinese speaks differed from the Cantonese that I spoke. I was very grateful to the respondents who explained the term they speak in simpler manner when I stopped them. Through this, messages were conveyed quite accurately.

iii. Interviews and Questionaries

During the fieldwork, many of my respondents suspected me to be an agent for the government to get information from them. One of my respondents accused me of reminding her of her sorrowful past. I had to assure them again and again that I was doing this study for my graduation exercises. However, I overcome this by mentioning my uncle's name as he is quite popular in their midst. Generally, many of them were very helpful and answered the questions forwarded willingly.

In the course of the interviews, I faced the problem of being easily side-tracked to other matters which did not concern the study. This was tolerated to make the respondents feel at ease and thus, a smooth flow of conversation would discover some important information.

Some of the questions asked needed explanations and this required a long period of time.

iv. Miscellaneous.

Library research posed another problem as some of the essential literature was not available. The literature and books concerning the activities and regulations of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon in the association are in Chinese which I did not understand. An interpreter was needed to translate them for me.

CHAPTER 2

Background and some general characteristics of the

Sam Sui Wui Kwoon (SSWK) in Malacca

2.1 Historical Background

SSWK is a clan association and its members are the Sam Sui Cantonese clan Chinese. The place of their origin is the district of Sam Sui in the province of Kwangtung (see map 2:2 and 2:3) in China.

The name 'Sam Sui' (三水) was derived from the three rivers that flow through this district; i.e. Pei Chiang River (Northern River), Si Chiang River (Western River) and Tuak Chiang. In the Cantonese dialect, 'Sam' means three and 'Sui' means water - referring to the three rivers that flows through that district. Wui Kwoon is a Cantonese term for association, hence the name SSWK or literally the association of people from the three water areas.

The Sam Sui District is about 160 miles long and 90 miles wide. It came into existence in 1526 during the Ming Dynasty. In the 1800, Sam Sui became very prosperous as a market because of its good location. The fertile land where every bit of level land is highly cultivated also contributed to its prosperity. However, the Sam Sui District did not enjoy its prosperity for long and was not spared the natural calamities - famines, droughts, floods, starvation and deaths were very common events until the people there were exhausted. Besides these hardships faced, the Sam Sui Chinese also had to put up with the pressure of the increasing population and the heavy taxation imposed upon them. All the above problems were forces which caused the Sam Sui Chinese to emigrate and a

great number of them came to Malaysia. The exact date in which they arrived here is not known.

SSWK came into existence in Malacca in the year 1915-1917. This was when the Sam Sui Chinese here realised that they needed to have a corporate body to fight for their rights, help them to contact their relatives whom they had left behind in China and also help them to familiarize themselves with the new place. At this time, the Sam Sui Chinese gathered together at one of their houses where plans to establish and build an association were discussed seriously. In the autumn and spring seasons in 1917, committee members were elected to set up their plans. The first function performed by the SSWK was the ancestral worship. The elected committee members went to every Sam Sui Chinese in Malacca and collected contributions to buy offerings for the ancestral worship. In this function, individual patrilineal tablets were honoured and a delegation of members went to pay respect to a group monument of their ancestors in a cemetery which is now known as the Malacca Jelutong Cemetery. It was a successful event as many of the Sam Sui Chinese participated and showed much enthusiasm in assisting in the establishment of an association. Everyone then was so inspired to press on to see their dreamed association materialised. Get-together dinners and luncheons were planned. Every meeting held was fully supported by their fellow clansmen. Usually after every meeting, the members have a commensal meal, toasting sacrificial wine and sharing sacrificial meat.

From the 1979 Singapore Sam Sui Wui Kwoon magazine, it is recorded that the committee members then were Lim San, Chao Nan, Mak So, Choy Kong

Kei, Yip Long Si, Lau Sam, Yip Peng Kong and Lee Mun Kuan. In 1918, Chao Nan proposed to the government the establishment of SSWK. It was officially registered in 1919. A building, (now used as a funeral parlour and a place for the sick to recuperate) addressed at 20, Temple Street was rented at \$10 a month to be the office of the association. At that time, the registration fee was \$5 per member. In order to have some cash flow for the maintenance of the associations, each member was required to pay a monthly subscription fee of 20¢. Though the amount appears small now, it was a large amount at that time. In those days, a packed meal cost about 1¢. This indicates that the value of 20¢ during the 20s is approximately equivalent to \$10 today. Members were willing to pay that amount because they were keen to achieve their goal.

As the association improved its finances, many members were recruited. At that time, SSWK rented out its premises for marriage dinners, birthday celebrations, funerals and also for those who would like to 'tou leong' (recuperate) there. The demands for the premises of SSWK were so great that the committee had to buy more furniture, pots and pans, plates and saucers to meet the needs.

There were some talented Sam Sui Chinese who were good in the lion-dance. Thus, a lion-dance troupe was organized in 1922. The necessary equipment, costumes and instruments were bought. However, many of the leaders were not happy with this as they felt that it would be just a waste of money. Moreover, at that period, the rent had already increased to \$20 a month which added to the association's financial burdens. Many of the members became dissatisfied which resulted in their resignation. This caused a sharp drop in the monthly collection of subscription fees

which meant a further financial setback for the association. Despite this problem, the association managed to buy a small portion of the Tai Pak Kong San - a cemetery in Jelutong, Malacca in 1924. With the ownership of this portion of the cemetery, came an added source of income as additional fees were charged when its members made use of the land for burial.

This coupled with an influx of members later on greatly improved the association financial standing. Housing the association in its own premises was pronounced as viable and feasible. The property was regarded as essential and its importance is seen in the following quotation:

"The building is necessary to bring the clan members together. When the clan is consolidated, the young members will respect their elders. Their moral conduct will be encouraged and their benevolent feeling will be cultivated so that they will help those members who cannot afford to get married and those members who cannot afford to bury their deceased " (Wang, fn.63:112)

One of the committee members at that time, Chien Kwee Leng . . . recommended a building at 98, Tun Tan Cheng Lock Road which is the present main building of SSWK. The association had various ways to raise funds:- occasional solicitation, appeal to the members, encouragement to contribute, certain required contributions and also monthly tontines. Just before the Japanese Occupation, SSWK had collected and deposited \$1500 into the Overseas Chinese Bank in the Malacca Branch. During the Japanese Occupation, the money was frozen. The Japanese original policy toward the Chinese association was to threaten them into submission and co-operation.

This effort failed and a moderate attempt was tried; i.e. the government will assure a minimum living standard, eliminate discriminatory fees and respect religion and customs. Even this did not inspire voluntarism among the members in SSWK.

The SSWK's members statistics during that period was unreliable because Chua Chook Ping, one of the committee members at that time, destroyed the members' list as he was afraid that the Japanese would search them out and kill them.

During that period of war, the activities in the association were all stopped temporarily. The members dispersed to seek cover and it was only when the British returned to Malaysia in September, 1945 that SSWK started functioning again. Some Regulations about the membership were changed for the benefit of its members.

A doctor named Dr. Kwong Chen Ching was in the committee then and he volunteered to give free medical treatment to all the members of SSWK. In this sense, the association had an extra role that of a clinic. In 1947, Dr. Kwong was elected the President of the association and he contributed \$1000 to the Building Fund. In only a short period of nine months, SSWK was able to collect \$8300 for the purchase of the building at 98, Tun Tan Cheng Lock Road. The Singapore SSWK contributed \$1300 to this fund whereas the Kuala Lumpur SSWK donated \$1000. Another \$5000 came from the contributions of fellow members. All the members were very 'yuit sam' (united) in working hard towards the purchase of this building on 13th March, 1948 at 999 years leasehold contract.

The early history of SSWK was marked by many difficulties but

their humble origin never hindered them from progress. Many of the members have stayed with the association through thick and thin. It is belived that there were 400 members in the association before the war in 1940 and after the Japanese Occupation in 1947, the number had increased to 600 members. Many of the developments in SSWK had been a direct result of the successful ventures of the members. They have effectively organized the flow of activities in the association. Ventures undertaken were often done in a co-operative manner.

Aside from ancestral worship, dinners, legalizing marriages, funerals and the lion-dance, the association also administered financial help to those who were poor and eligible for it. The SSWK helped in locating job opportunities for its members. Most of the Sam Sui Chinese were machine proprietors at that time and thus, it was not surprising that many of the younger ones or those newly arrived immigrants were employed in this field.

The Sam Sui Chinese were a group of 'China orientated' people. Eventhough they had already migrated and settled in Malaysia, they still maintained strong ties with their kinsfolk in China. The association served as a means for those seeking to locate clansmen and events in Sam Sui in the Province of Kwangtung. At that time, many of the Sam Sui Chinese still had the desire that one day they would return to their homeland in China as the Chinese nationalistic feeling was very strong in their midst. So the association played a vital role in helping its members to go back to China.

It would be surprising to note that though the Sam Sui Chinese were people who were very particular about ancestral rites, they did not run temples of their own as other associations did. The reason being they did not have enough funds. Education was no doubt of importance to the Sam Shui Chinese but the association gave verbal encouragement only. Much later in 1957-1960, SSWK lent its premises to the Pay Teck School as there were not enough classrooms in the school premises. Two classes of 30-40 boys and girls were taught there. Though not many Sam Sui Chinese children went to this school, SSWK felt very glad to be of some help in the education field.

During their leisure hours, the Sam Sui Chinese would go to the association to relax, chit-chat and also to read newspapers. After the Second World War, an opera singing class was opened. Members learned to sing 'yuit kok' i.e. the old classical Cantonese song. During any social gatherings and dinners, 'yuit kok' became a very popular and highly demanded item. Tai Chi classes (a Chinese form of exercise to keep the physical body strong and healthy) was organized. These classes were welcomed and many members joined the classes.

Whenever SSWK was invited to take part in any religious processions; for instance the Wesak Day Procession or Tai Pak Kong (Main Tutillary God of the Cantonese and Hakka clan) birthday procession, the association would present a floral lorry with lighted bulbs and a two-three men team to play the flute and the drum.

In the 1920s till the early 40s (with an interval during the Second World War) and the late 40s till the 60s, it could be said that SSWK was very active in playing the role as the centre of the economic and social aspect of the lives of its members. Problems faced were always referred to fellow members in the association. They worked together and seemed to base their activities on this principle: 'United we stand, divided we fall'. They had a testimony of good behaviour and conduct. Because of such a reputation, they were never suspected as a secret society or a kongsi. At that time, many early Chinese immigrants formed secret societies because they were constantly challenged by the repressive external controls.

Besides being involved in the economic and social sphere of the Sam Sui Chinese, SSWK also provided a shadow government whose authority competed with the political leadership of English speaking Chinese (Mottors, 1921:7a). Unfortunately, SSWK lacked political influence and articulation despite the fact that they had a strong base of social support.

2.2 Location

Presently SSWK has its headquarters in two buildings. The main building is located at the Tun Tan Cheng Lock Road whereas the other building is situated at Jalan Tokong. Both these buildings are within walking distance i.e. about 100 metres away. See map 2.1

2.3 General Observations

Both the SSWK buildings do not look very welcoming. They are very old two-storey buildings built by the British in the 1900s. The main building occupies about 1161 sq. feet whereas the other one is about 948 sq. feet. See plate 1 and 2.



Plate 1: The main building of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon.
98, Tun Tan Cheong Lock Road, Malacca



Plate 2: The second building of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon.

20, Temple Street, Malacca.

The association hires an old lady-caretaker from the Sam Sui clan to take charge of overall cleanliness of the main building and also to offer incense before the ancestral tablets. She is 65 years old (1984) and does not look strong enough to do heavy physical work. Actually SSWK is doing here a favour because she does not have a place to stay and has no relative to turn for help. There is no bed in the building and when asked where she sleeps, she said that she sleeps on a few benches put together. There is a table where the clerk, also from the Sam Sui Clan, works. She works from 10 - 12 am everyday except weekends. She is employed for \$200 per month. Her responsibilities include collecting subscription fees, keeping the accounts of the

association and also all the office works. Whenever there is a meeting, she will write the minutes (the secretary of SSWK would check her written minutes). Besides that, organization of annual dinners and ritual activities are done by the committee member in charge but she is required to write letters and notices to inform all the other members. All paper work is done by her.

The door of the building is only opened when the clerk is around. Apart from this time there is no one else in the association except for the caretaker. The hall is very dark even during the day time. This is because the windows and doors are always shut as the committee feel that it is safer since the old caretaker is incapable to encounter any strangers or intruder. When one steps into the ancestral hall, one literally feels a chill running down one's spinal cord. The darkness and quietness adds to the gloom and eeriness already present. As one member puts it sarcastically, 'even if you were to give me \$1,000, I will never dare to step into that building alone, referring to the ancestral hall'. See plate 3 and 4 below.



Plate 3: The passage way
leading to the
ancestral hall.



On the wall are the pictures of all the previous committee members and also the present ones. See Plate 5.



Plate 5: Pictures of committee members

2.4 Use of building

The premises of the main building of SSWK is opened to any of the members to hold any functions such as marriage dinners or birthday celebrations. The association does not charge any fees but members who rent the place usually give an ang pow (a red packet containing money) which ranges from \$20 - \$200. In the past, marriage dinners and luncheons were always held there but for the last 5 years, there was not a single such function held except for the customary annual dinners. When asked why this was so, I was told that the place is too small as compared to bigger restaurants like Riverine Restaurant and Bamboo House. Moreover, the location of the place is not very good as there is no parking lot available. The furniture and utensils were all too old. This cannot be denied as I was bitten by bugs during one of my visits there. This could only be explained by the uncleanness and that the chairs are too old.

The second building is only occupied when it's converted to a funeral parlour in the event of a death or when somebody needed to 'tou leong' there. Otherwise, it is left vacant. As for members who want to use the old building of SSWK as a funeral parlour, they are entitled to use the premises for three days at only \$20. After the third day, each consecutive day is charged at \$5 per day. This additional sum of money is for the electricity and water. In the early beginnings, members could use the premises free of charge but presently

because of financial difficulties, a small amount is charged. Before the Second World War, non-members were not allowed to use the place though there were exceptional cases. However, after the War, non-members were allowed the privilege to use the premises at a cost of \$20 each day.

Members who recuperate (tou leong) in the association can use the premises for a maximum of seven days without being charged. However, should circumstances require them to stay longer, they are charged \$2 for each additional day. There are no beds in SSWK so members usually bring their own pillows and blankets and they will sleep on a few benches put together. The place, therefore despite its designated use, is not a conducive place for one who is to recuperate. According to the Chinese superstition, if one keeps a sick person in the home for too long, bad luck would fall upon the family and it will even be worse if he or she dies there. That is why SSWK is so important in this aspect.

Any members found violating these rules and regulations would be punished and dealt with by those in authority. This is necessary so as to preserve the good name of the association.

2.5 The Objective of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon

There are three basic objectives of SSWK which were conceived during the setting up of the association. The functions and activities organized are geared mainly to these three objectives:-

- i) To foster and promote the fraternity, harmony and welfare of fellow clansmen and to give assistance to all matters of common good (lin lok kam ching). It must be remembered that the Chinese lineage community is very stable and is bound by rules of kinship. One of the important clan rules mentions brotherly love immediately after filial piety. The standard definition of brotherly love is 'affection from the elders and respect from the younger ones. By affection, it is meant kindness with due regard; and by respect, it is meant deference and cooperation'. In other words, brotherly love is an attitude of mutual cordiality between fellow members in the interest of clan harmony.
- ii) To assist clansmen in providing them with affiliation familiar to them. The Sam Sui Chinese immigrants felt out of place in a different climate, society and also a different way of life. It pays special attention to the poor and also the old who do not have any relatives here. Those unemployed are the concern of the association. To achieve a good education also remains as one of the important objectives.
- iii) To help fellow members in the rites of mourning - in the handling of the corpse and the recruitment of wailers. (A proper funeral with enough wailing is one way to maintain

status in the eyes of the Chinese). Funerals are usually organized by the fellow members of the association. Besides this, the association is supposedly the source of comfort and consolation to the family of the deceased who is the fellow member..

The above objectives were taken upon very seriously in the initial stage. However, social and economic changes have caused SSWK to lose sight of objectives i) and ii). Thus, it can be said that though these objectives still stand as the main three objectives of SSWK, they are not really emphasized except for the last objective.

2.6. The Constitution and Regulations

The Sam Sui Chinese who were members of the association did not have any written constitution as it was not really required by the law during its time of establishment even though Malacca had adopted the 1869 Ordinance; i.e. compulsory registration of all societies. This does not mean that there are no rules or regulations in the association. There is a set of verbalised constitution and regulation for the smooth running and social control (attitude and behaviour of clan members) of the association. It also fulfills an important functional necessity in a closely knit clan group life. They are the moral codes in verbalised form to induce voluntary conformity without which no group can function smoothly according to its accepted ways. Members who violate these rules are liable to

suffer group disapproval, punishment and exclusion. The subject matter in the constitution and regulation ranges from registration and subscription fees to the responsibilities of the leaders of the association. The date of which the written constitution came into existence was not known. Every member, despite their social status and power, is required to follow regulations in the constitution.

For those who would like to be a member in the Death Benefit Fund have to pay a monthly subscription fee of \$1. All subscription fees must be paid one month in advance. Any member who fails to pay their fees within three months consecutively will be expelled from the association. All fees are not refundable in any case of resignation, suspension or expulsion. There has been no changes in this aspect since the inception of the association. The reason being the government did not approve of the increment of fees of the association. Moreover the trouble of going through the red tapes in this matter discouraged them from doing so.

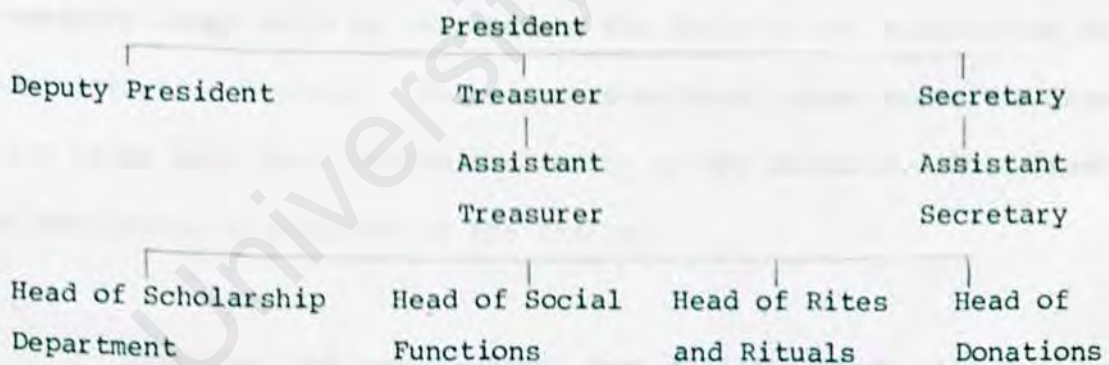
2.7 The Organization of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon

The groundwork for the organization of SSWK is on voluntary basis. The committee is chosen by democratic means once in very two years. Members of SSWK nominate and vote for those whom they would like, to take up various positions.

The structure of the committee board is in a hierarchy where the head is the president and assisting him are the secretary and the

treasurer. Each of these officers has an assistant. They are the ones who take charge of the overall affairs and functions of SSWK. The rest are committee members incharge of various departments. Their responsibilities vary, one from the another, depending on their positions. Their roles are very flexible as they are readily involved in any special ocassion. It is noted that the leadership is predominantly male with one a female committee member. From the history of SSWK, one notes that the committee usually comprises people of higher social and economic standing. This actually becomes the strength of the association because the officers and committee members are the main source of finance.

The Committee Board



Meetings are held in the main building of the SSWK once in two months following the lunar calender. They do not, however, adhere rigidly to only six meetings per year. Additional meetings will be called for should any emergencies aries. The meetings are conducted in the linguafranca of the members - Sam Sui Cantonese.

2.7 Finance

The source of finance for the maintenance of the association such as electricity and water bill, salaries of the clerk and the caretaker and rentals of the old SSWK building comes from the registration and subscription fees. Each member must pay their fees duly. SSWK does not face any problems in the collection of the fees as the majority of its' members usually pay their subscription fees for the whole year so that they do not need to go to the association every month. This eased a lot of the clerk's problem.

The family of any member who dies would receive \$150 as a financial aid from the Death Benefit Fund. When there are few deaths, this meant that the association would contribute less money, so the remaining money would be retained in the funds of the association for administrative expenses. There are exceptional cases where the association gives more than \$150 to the family of the deceased. This depends on the financial position of the family.

Donations and contributions from fellow members also form part of the finance of the association. Members who contributed above a certain amount of money would have their names inscribed on the wall monument. See Plate 6 and Plate 7 below.

Plate 6: The first two wall monuments of the names of those who had contributed above a certain sum of money.



Plate 7: When the wall monuments were filled up,



When the association is in need of funds for the renovation of the building (SSWK has been renovated twice) and for the repairs of the tombstone of the ancestral graveyard, donations and contributions will be given by fellow members. Once in a while whenever there is a 'hei si' i.e. a happy occasion such as a wedding or a birthday in a member's household, that family would contribute a sum of money to the association. This amount varies, depending on the wealth of that particular member. Rich members would give as much as \$500 whereas some give \$50. In return, the association gives the donor a souvenir which could be in the form of a plate (See plate 8) or just a thank-you card. This is practised because they believe that as they do good deeds, they will receive blessings in return.



Plate 8: A souvenir from SSWK.

For members who would like to place their ancestral tablets on the association hall, they are required to pay a special fee. The sum varies according to the relative honour of the altar position desired. A portion of the money is used to buy incense and to conduct services to the 'ancestral tablets' whereas the remaining amount is for the maintenance of the association.

SSWK does not have any property like Keng Chew Association in Negeri Sembilan which has rubber estates, (Chew, 1983) so it can be considered as an association which just breaks even. Whenever a financial need arose fellow members would pull their resources together and solve the problem.

CHAPTER THREE

Sam Sui Wui Kwoon - today's chapter

From the second chapter it can be said that SSWK has had a long and arduous journey during the last sixty five years. In its history, it had weathered many storms. Among the many storms; there are the financial crisis in the late 1940s when the many fellow members worked very hard at achieving its aim at that crucial period and the instability of the country in politics, economics and the social sphere during the Japanese Occupation and the Second World War. These two giant obstacles could have put an end to it, had it not been for the determination of the fellow members to overcome all obstacles encountered.

3.1 Functions of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon today

The SSWK of today have undergone several changes but it still continues as a vestige of Chinese tradition. It however still maintains the basic functions as it had done in the past. Reasons for such changes will be dealt with later in this chapter.

Presently, ancestral rites, still remains as one of the more important functions of SSWK. The ancestors are tended, revered and fed. The living acknowledge them as superiors, feeling indebted to them for their own lives and the goodness of it. When asked why this is so, they reasoned as they all came from a common ancestry, so the need to pay respect to their ancestors as a token of their appreciation towards them.

According to the ancient tradition, it is a practice of SSWK to observe rituals during Ch'ng Ming (清明), the Chinese All Souls' Day and also during the Chung Yuan (中元) - Feast of the Hungry Ghosts i.e. a time to offer sacrifices to the spirits in accordance with Buddhist practice. My observations revealed that the activities prescribed on Ch'ng Ming and Chung Yuan are generally the same.

During Ch'ng Ming, I observed that the members who went to the graveyard began the rites with the hitting of a 'gong'. See plate 9. This was followed by a chanting of some religious lines so as to call



Plate 9: The hitting of a 'gong' as a opening ceremony of the rituals at the graveyard.

the ancestral spirits to enjoy their meal. The food offering then followed. It consisted of roasted meat, Chinese dumplings (pau),

bananas, rice, sugar cane some flowers and also Chinese tea. See Plate 10. Every member burned joss sticks as a sign of respect. Plate 11 and 12. The silver paper and some false paper money (hell notes) are burned. It is the belief of the Chinese tradition that those ancestral spirits are able to receive those hell notes and can purchase things in the spiritual world. The more hell notes are burned, the richer those spirits become.



Plate 10

The various kinds of food offered.

Plate 11: Members pay respect to the ancestors.



excuse that they were too busy with their work. As a result, it was concluded that it was a waste of postage money and time to send letters and notices to members.

Another form of ancestral rites are the daily rituals performed in the ancestral hall in the association. The ancestral altara in SSWK is divided into two sections: the lower and the upper section. The lower section is used for the tablets of ancestors and each sitting costs about \$50 whereas the upper section is for those who pay \$100 for each allotted space. The implication for such a division is to show the social and economic status of the descendants and also for those ancestors whose tablets are in the upper section, their lives in the spiritual world would be more 'comfortable'. On special days like Ch'ng Ming, Chung Yuan, Chinese New Year, Moon Cake Festival and other special occasions, the caretaker of SSWK would perform sacrificial rites and upkeep the altars. The rites and festivities of these days are manifestations where men glorify their ancestors and parade them as the source of their being. On ordinary days, joss sticks and candles will be burnt as offering everyday. This form of worship implies that the ancestors are not 'entirely dead' but that their souls continue to survive as individuals and they bask in the flow of the solidarity and achievements of their descendants. Freedman 1957a :218-219 calls this practice as a memorialist cult.

After ancestral rites are performed at both the cemetery and also at the ancestral hall, members who attended the rituals and

services were given the privilege of feasting at a commensal meal and sharing sacrificial meat in a restaurant. This would be one of the rare times where fellow members enjoyed a meal together.

All the respondents who are members of SSWK generally practiced Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. This is one reason why ancestral whorship is most vital in the association.

The importance of education was realised since the inception of SSWK but due to the lack of funds and finance the association did not hold any programmes to promote it. However, in 1982, the committee felt the dire need to do something towards this end especially among the children of their clansmen. A scholarship fund was set up. Scholarships are awarded to members/members' children based on their scholastic aptitude. Presently, primary school students are given \$30 while secondary school students receive \$70 a year. These financial aids or scholarships are known in Cantonese as 'cheong lai kam'. Informal enquiries revealed that the association hopes to enlarge this scholarship fund to give loans to university students in the future. Though the amount may not be large the association feels proud to be able to provide financial aid to promising students amongst the Sam Sui Chinese. This is especially evident during the annual awards held every year. Light refreshment followed this prize giving ceremony. Plate 13 and 14 show the awarding of scholarships.

Plate 13: A committee member giving a speech before the scholarship awards were given.



Plate 14: The giving out of scholarship awards.



A reporter from the Sin Chew Jit Poh Daily newspaper was invited to write an article on the scholarship awards of SSWK on 17th April, 1984. See Appendix I. Four secondary students and eight primary school students received scholarships from SSWK this year. (1984) Even though the awarding of scholarships were highlighted, only a few parents and committee members involved in this function turned up. Enquiries revealed that lack of interest in the welfare of the association among the members is the main reason for such poor response.

Every year two grand annual dinners would be held in conjunction with the Ch'ng Ming and Chung Yuan. It is grand in the sense that it is a ten-course dinner and about 100 fellow members would attend such a function. Everyone who attends the dinner is required to pay a certain sum of money. In the past, members paid \$10 for the dinner but because of inflation and economic recession they paid \$20 for the 1984 Ch'ng Ming Festival Dinner which was held on the 15th April. Every member would be invited by invitation cards but only about 100 of them would turn up for the occasion. In the 1984 annual dinner, the attendance was 80-90 members. While eating, one of the committee members reminded the people that they are from the Sam Sui Cantonese Clan and they need to be united and committed to one another. This was necessary as many young people in today's generation do not even know which clan group they belong to. See Plate 15.



Plate 15: The 1984 Ch'ng Ming Festival dinner.

The Death Benefit Fund administers mutual financial aid by collecting dues from a separate membership list; i.e. those who contribute to this fund. It must be noted that not all members of SSWK contribute to this fund. This section is almost exclusively concerned with funerals. It provides a sum of \$150 on a member's death to help defray the cost of the funeral. This is totally financed through the members' dues. Whenever there is a death of a member other members of the association are required to be present in the evenings before the funeral or at the funeral itself. It is sad to note that now many of the other members do not do so and some mentioned that they were not aware of the death of certain members until the funeral day or even after that. This reveals that the members do not relate as closely as was done in the past.

There are plans to celebrate the 65 th Anniversary of SSWK but circumstances are discouraging. Some of the committee members are not too keen to commit themselves to such a task as it will consume a lot of their time and money. Moreover, many of the members are not willing to contribute financially to this project. Thus, this may at best remain a dream.

The lion-dance troupe was short-lived (1921-1925) i.e. about five years. This was because a few of the leaders were not happy with it as they argued that it was a waste of money to maintain such a troupe. At that time, very few men were adept to the needed skill and members were more concerned to earn their living than to concentrate on such an art. So, the lion-dance troupe had to be dissolved.

Tai chi and the classical opera Cantonese singing classes were also dissolved due to the same operating factors. At the moment there is not a single cultural activity organized by the association. SSWK, as an employment agency is only so in the association's history as it does not perform this role anymore. Financial aid given to the poor and unemployed have already ceased for a long period of time due to financial difficulties faced by the association. Despite the fact that there are newspapers in the association the role of SSWK as a centre of relaxation and melting pot during leisure hours was not seen at all. My enquiries revealed that the association is always locked and members have difficulty getting in even to pay their subscription fees, what more to relax there. Apart from 10-12am daily (weekdays), the door of

SSWK is always locked. Members said that they would rather join social clubs like the Air Keroh Social Club and the Malacca Club for social purposes.

ready a member in the association to recommend him for membership. This is important as the friend or relative will act as a

SSWK maintains close ties with the other branches of SSWK i.e the Perak branch, Penang branch, Kuala Lumpur branch and also the Singapore branch. In every two years, all these associations will hold a general meeting where the various branches will share the activities and achievements of their own association. My investigations reveal that Singapore SSWK consists of the most number of members and has the most activities and can be classified as an active association compared to those in other states in Malaysia.

Has SSWK of the Malacca branch declined in its activities?

Comparing its' activities in the past with the present, it can be said that there is a vast difference. Previously in the economic, social or political matters, the Sam Sui Chinese would refer them to the association. The association is the second important social institution in their lives, after their families. But now, the association has lost its importance. Various reasons could be attributed to this as shall be discussed in Chapter Four.

3.2 Membership

According to the constitution of SSWK, any person belonging to the Sam Sui Cantonese Clan, above 18 years old has a steady job

and is mentally sound, is eligible to register himself as a member of the association. However, he or she must have a friend or relative who is already a member in the association to recommend him for membership. This is important as the friend or relative will act as a guarantor of that new member.

However, there has been cases of expulsion and suspension of members in the association in the early stages but now this is rare. It is written in the constitution that SSWK has every authority to expel or suspend any members on the condition that:

- i) when the government informs the association no to accept such a member.
- ii) members who misbehave and brings shame and disgrace to the clan as well as the association.
- iii) members who refuse to submit to the regulations and rules of the association.

As for the number of members in the association, the record of the list of members before the Second World War shows that there were about 600 members. The specific number of males and females was unknown but it is believed that there were more male members than female members as females were seldom encouraged to be involved in such kind of activities. There is evidence that there is a drop in the number of members in SSWK. See Table 3.1

Table 3.1 The number of member 1974-1984

Year	No of members
1974	438
1978	420
1980	408
1982	365
1984	320

Today (1984) there are about 320 members in SSWK. The exact number of male and female member is not known but it is estimated that there is about 60% male and 40% female members. Now, female membership is encouraged as it is generally accepted that women can bear the work load of SSWK as well as men, if not better. The concept of the equality of rights of women has definitely seeped into SSWK.

Characteristics of Members

Table 3.2 Age

Age	Male	Female
21-30	1	1
31-40	6	-
41-50	2	-
51-60	2	-
61-70	4	3
71-80	1	3
81-90	1	1

The table above gives a clear picture of the ages of the respondents who are members of SSWK. A closer look shows that most of the respondents that were interviewed are above 40 years old. This shows that most of the members are of a more middle-aged and elderly aged group. 52% are in the age group 61 and above and most of them came directly from China. There are more Sam Sui Chinese from China who are members from those local born.

Among the respondents, 28% are widows and only 4% are widowers. 8% are still singles whereas the remaining 60% are married with families. See Table 3.3 below.

Marital Status	No.	%
Single	2	8
Married	15	60
Widow	7	28
Widower	1	4
	25	100

Table 3.3 Marital Status of Respondents.

Employment and education

As seen from Table 3.4, 44% of the members of SSWK are Proprietors. They include machine-shop proprietors, goldsmith shop owners, printing press and also tailor shop owner.

Out of the 25 members interviewed, 8% are engineers, 28% have retired while social worker, NEB officer, Enforcement officer, subscription collector and rubber selector constitute 4% each of the sample here.

Table 3.4 Occupation of the members

	Occupation	No.	%
Self employed	Machine Shop	8	32
proprietor	Goldsmith	1	4
	Printing press	1	4
	Tailor Shop	1	4
Government	Social Worker	1	4
Servant	Officer in NEB	1	4
	Enforcement Officer	1	4
Wage earner	Subscription Collector	1	4
	Rubber Selector	1	4
Private Sector	Engineer	2	8
employer			
Retired		7	28
Total		25	100

Generally most of them are either managers of their own shop or already retired due to their old age and failing health. A handful of them are professionals such as engineers. Therefore, it could be concluded that employment among the members varies greatly from one to another.

The scope for improvement in their careers seem to be limited only to one field; i.e. machine shop proprietors. This could be attributed to the fact that there is generally a low level of education amongst them and thus, they picked up the particular skills required through a period of time.

Table 3.5 Level of education

Education level	No.	%
Never attended school	5	20
Std 1 - 3	6	24
Std 4 - 6	4	16
Form 3	2	8
Form 5	5	20
Form 6	-	-
College	-	-
University	3	12
Total	25	100

As indicated by the table above, 20% of the respondents have never attended school before, 24% finished Std. 3, 16% finished Std. 6 while only 8% are educated until Form 3. 20% of them completed their Form 5 whereas 12% are university graduates. Despite the fact that many of them lacked education, they managed to be proprietors and as a result they are very important people in the association. My inquiries

also revealed that a vast majority of the respondent members i.e. 80% of them who are educated went to the Chinese vernacular schools because they wanted to retain their own culture and Chineseness, so as not to be alienated from 'their own people' i.e. the Chinese. It can thus be said that the Sam Sui Chinese who are members of the association are generally ethnocentric in outlook.

It cannot be denied that education is closely linked with employment. Education does not affect a member's position in the association directly but employment does because a person's income can be estimated by the job he holds. Income is often used as a measure of a person's standard of living and social status. SSWK depends greatly on those rich members who have maintained a consistently high position in the socio-economic scale in the Chinese society and can donate generously for the finances of the association. Usually a well-off member is always selected to be a committee member. It is therefore interesting to note that most of the committee members are either machine shop proprietors or businessmen. However, there are a few wage earners in the committee who wholeheartedly commit themselves to serve the Sam Sui Chinese through the association.

Further investigations revealed that there is no discrimination of treatment and aid rendered to fellow members regardless of their economic and social status because according to the clan rules, the Sam Sui Chinese have to treat fellow clansmen as one Chinese joint family as they are all in the 'common descent' or better known in its

Chinese original term, 'tsu'.

3.4 Involvement of members in the functions of Sam Sui Wui Kwoon

From my survey sample of members only nine members attend the meetings and functions of the association while the remaining sixteen do not do so. Those who attend meetings and functions are usually those in the committee. Despite the fact that they are members, many of them cited lack of interest and time as reasons for not participating in the association activities. Five of them said that they preferred be involved in things more 'worthwhile' such as part-time jobs and learning some skills in tailoring and hair-dressing.

It is interesting to note the various reasons each individual member has for joining the association. See Table 3.6 below.

Reasons for membership in SSWK	No.	%
Feels obliged to as he is a Sam Sui Chinese	5	10
To strengthen their relationship with other members	10	40
To get financial aid from the Death Benefit Fund	4	16
Forced by parents	-	-
Follow others' footsteps	5	20
Total	25	100

Table 3.6 Reasons for membership.

Surprisingly, none of the members said that they are interested in the association as their first purpose for joining the association. 40% said that they want to build and strengthen their relationship with people of their own clan. They do not want to lose their own Sam Sui identification. The four members who joined the association in order to obtain the Death Benefit Fund are without any families in Malaysia. They are either unattached or are widows and therefore do not have any close relatives. Thus, they have the problem of burial when they die and also a proper place for their ancestral tablets. Their hope is that the SSWK members would see to their funeral rites, to ensure that the rites are properly executed for them according to their beliefs. None of the members gave reasons that the association is a place to congregate in their leisure hours. This clearly indicates that SSWK is no more regarded as a place for leisure.

When questioned whether they are satisfied with the functions of the association, 32% said that they have no comments as they are hardly involved in the association, 20% felt that the association would still continue with its function though progress seemed beyond reach while 48% said that one day SSWK will close down.

The activities and functions carried out by SSWK do not seem to attract many members, especially the younger generation who are members. For instance, the Ch'ng Ming Festival where members gathered at the ancestral graveyard only fourteen adults went. Out of these

fourteen members, 12 of them are above 60 years old. Two small boys followed their fathers but they do not know the purposes of the ancestral rites. It is very common that most of the functions are attended and performed by those in the committee and in this case eight of those present are in the committee. They felt obliged to do it fully aware that without them nobody would attend to such rituals. The attendance for the day for the awards scholarship was poor. All but one of the committee members attended the function and as for the ordinary members none came. As for the dinner held on the 15th of April in conjunction with the Ch'ng Ming Festival, about 80-90 people came. However, from my conversation with them, I realised that many young ones (18-23 years old) are not members but represent their parents who are members and who could not attend the dinner. As for the association meetings held, they are also generally poorly attended. On average only about 12-15 committee members attend. Ordinary members said that they do not attend any meetings because they do not know when the meeting is and even if they knew, most of them could probably not attend. From my observations and interviews, I could see that they have no initiative to improve the situation in SSWK and cannot be bothered as to what will happen to it in future. There are certain members who would like to contribute ideas and suggestions initially but their zeal and fire had been watered down as their plans were rejected by those in the leadership.

To gain a clearer picture of the attitude of the various members, we look now at some cases:-

Case One: Mr. Kong

Mr. Kong aged 36 years old is machine shop proprietor and had been a member of SSWK for the last six years. He became a member since the death of his father who was a member of the association. He felt obliged to continue his family's tradition by being a member himself.

In the beginning as a member, he showed much enthusiasm in the activities of the association - attended every meeting and made himself available for all functions. He was determined to be of service to his fellow clansmen but his spirit was dampened after a while. He was very dissatisfied with most of the thing in the association. Being young, full of energy and creativity, he gave a lot of suggestions to enrich the association such as reforming the lion-dance troupe, have some mahjong games in the association, install a phone in the association as there is none now, set up a library with a variety of interesting books, organize games and competitions and also repaint the building with brighter colours to make it look lively. All of his suggestions were rejected with the excuse that the association could not afford to carry out any of his plans. Mr. Kong felt that it was the fault of the leaders as most of them are of the elderly age group with the youngest of them 46 years old. According to him, they are too conservative and have no initiative and just refuse changes blindly. The lack of finance he felt was just an excuse as the principle is where there is a will, there is always a way to get the money. Mr. Kong mentioned too that should nothing change, SSWK very well collapse in the not too distant future.

Presently, Mr. Kong does not put much interest in the association as he thinks it will only be a waste of time. He would rather concentrate on his business. However, he still attend the functions of the association whenever he has the time and gives donations when anyone from SSWK approaches him.

Case Two: Mr. Lee

Mr. Lee, 36 years of age is working as an enforcement officer in the government sector. He is the son of one of the committee members. His father registered him a member of the association about a year ago without his knowledge and he came to know about it only a few months later when he received a letter and an invitation card from the association informing him of the annual dinner. Confused by the invitation, he contacted his father who told him about his membership in the SSWK. His father has been paying the subscription fees and also the registration fees for him.

Mr. Lee confessed that he does not know much of the association and he did not try to find out anything about it. He does not believe in breaking up the Chinese into various clans as this would only jeopardize the strength of the Chinese. He said that whenever he is asked what clan he belongs, he would say that he is from the Chinese clan and not the Sam Sui Clan. Therefore he has no intentions of getting himself involve in SSWK. He would rather be active in politics such as being a member in the MCA.

The two cases above showed the members who are not very keen in the association. In case Three, we shall see another kind a member who is zealous for the association.

Case Three: Miss Keat Cheh

She is a spinster. She is 72 years old and have been a member of SSWK for 48 years since she came to Malaysia. Whenever there is a meeting or function, she is often there. She was one of those who had worked very hard to collect donations and contributions for the purchase of the present main building. She said that she is very satisfied with the association eventhough it is not as active as before because the association has contributed a great deal to the Sam Sui Chinese members. She is glad that she could be of service to the fellow members.

Participation of members in the functions of the association depends greatly on their background, education and their family. The purpose of their involvement is generally for personal as well as the benefit of other fellow members.

3.5 Relationship with fellow members

Though there may only be a few occasions in a year when members meet, nevertheless my observation have enabled me to see a

few obvious traits in the relationship between fellow members. The older generation seems to be able to associate with one another freely and each time they gather together, they would tell each other their latest experience in business or talk about fellow members. This is generally among the men. As for the women, they would gossip and chit-chat with such enthusiasm as if they have not seen each other for years. As for the relationship between member of the older generation and members of the younger generation, it cannot be denied that there is a strain. The older generation always try to impose their traditional values to the younger generation which the latter find hard to accept. But, the younger ones must pay the respect and deference due to an elder, so many times they give in to them. That is why the younger members do not like to associate themselves with the elders.

The younger generation like to joke among themselves and each time they meet, they always burst into laughter but in the presence of the older folks, they would behave soberly. However, such restrictions had hindered their relationship to bloom.

Members of both sexes converse freely among the older generation. As among the younger generation this is not so. This could be attributed to the fact that they are shy, they are quite new to each other and know little of one another because they are from different family and social background.

The degree of solidarity in any association is based strongly on the close relationships its members possess. Most of the respondents who are members have relatives who are also members of the association. The table 3.7 below indicates the number of respondents who are members of SSWK who have relatives who are also members and their relationship with them.

Table 3.7: Relationship of respondents with their kinsfolk who are members of SSWK.

Relationship with Respondents	No.
Nobody	10
Father/Mother	6
Brother/Sister	7
Husband/Wife	2
Uncle/ Aunt	1
Son/Daughter	3

From the table, it shows that a large number of members do not have any relatives who are members in SSWK, these people either joined SSWK after the death of their fathers or in two cases are widows whose late husbands were formally members. The remaining two members became members as their friends encouraged them when they first came to Malacca. As for the others, their uncles and fathers play very important roles in influencing them to be members.

When asked how many other members whom they know personally, all member respondents said that they do not know everybody because

there was never an occasion when all the members are present. Only a handful of the members reveal that they know most of the members. Some of them said that beside their own relatives and family friends (who are members) they do not know other members. From this, it can be concluded that relationship between fellow members is limited. Besides meeting in the association for special functions like dinners and rituals, they hardly have any opportunity to meet and really get to know one another. Each member is too busy with their own welfare and interest and thus can be considered as being hardly committed to SSWK.

The ages of the respondents interviewed varied from 17-88 years. This is indicated in Table 4.1 below.

Age of respondents	No.
15-24 years	4
25-34	3
35-44	2
45-54	4
55-64	3
65-74	2

Table 4.1 Age of respondents

Interviews revealed that all of the respondents, with the exception of one, have at least a relative who is a member of SSWK. The pattern of their relationship can be seen in the table 4.2 below.

CHAPTER FOUR

The SSWK: An evaluation of its status, functions and membership

The present SSWK have declined in its activities and functions tremendously as compared to the SSWK in the past. To make an indepth study as to why this has happened, twenty-five non-members from the Sam Sui Chinese clan were interviewed. No limitations or restrictions as regards sex, age, occupation or religion were imposed in choosing the respondents.

The ages of the respondents interviewed ranged from 17-66 years. This is indicated in Table 4.1 below.

Age of respondents	No.
15-24 years old	8
25-34	5
35-44	3
45-54	4
55-64	3
65-74	2

Table 4.1 Age of Respondents

Interviews revealed that all of the respondents, with the exception of one, have at least a relative who is a member of SSWK. The pattern of their relationship can be seen in the table 4.2 next page.

Table 4.2 The Pattern of members' relationship

Relationship with respondents	No.
None	1
Parents	14
Siblings	8
Spouse	2
Uncle/Aunt	3
Children	2

Most of the non-member respondent have parents who are members of the association. It is interesting to see why they have many relatives who are members of SSWK and yet they do not register themselves as one. My study have discovered various reasons for their unwillingness to be members and to participate in the functions organized by the association.

Table 4.3 gives several reasons each individual non-member.

There are several reasons why individuals are not joining the association. There are different kinds of reasons. Some are about the association, the difficulty one faces being a member and also for the lack of interest. From the reasons given they can be categorized accordingly:-

Table 4.3 Reasons given for non-membership

Reasons for non-members	No.
Unhappy with the activities of the association	3
Association not appropriate	2
Communication Barrier	5
Objection from family members	3
Lack of interest - has other interest	10
No time - too busy	11
Change of religion	6
No peer friends - no company	2
Obselete functions	6
Waste of money and time	5
Malaysianization	3
Cheated	1
Troublesome	5
Ignorance	4

Table 4.3 cites several reasons each individual non-member posed for not joining the association. There are different kinds of opinions about the association, the difficulty one faces being a member and also for the lack of interest. From the reasons given they can be categorized accordingly:-

a) Social aspect.

The most frequent reason given for non-membership is that they have no interest. This can be explained as the respondents find SSWK does not provide much or rather any activities and functions which are up to their tastes and likes. Some of the respondents said that the association only performs ancestral rites and rituals like ancestral worship, celebrating Ch'ng Ming Festival and funeral rites. With this in mind, obviously they would have no interest because some of them said that life is a long road and they should learn how to enjoy life instead. All these activities are too 'old fashioned'. The younger ones, especially, never gave thought to these. They would rather spend their time on games developing their own interest on tennis, squash, billiard, disco, swimming, etc. These are a few ways of 'enjoying life'. The emergence of more associations such as multi-racial clubs and youth clubs and other recreational facilities which are more secular in nature attribute to the decline in membership in SSWK. The above bodies are competitors vis-a-vis the membership.

There is also the problem of communication especially with those who are English educated. They have problems in understanding discussions during meetings, news and periodicals which are published in Chinese by the association and other functions because the language spoken is Sam Sui Cantonese. The English educated young people only speak basic Cantonese. As such, failure to comprehend sophisticated

Cantonese leads to frustration. Another reason could be the English educated ones are of a different "school of thought" altogether from the Chinese educated ones. Some of the Sam Sui Chinese who acquire English education are holding white collar jobs. They have different ideas about life and are liberal and therefore do not agree with the idea of breaking up the Chinese community into various clan groups.

Some of the non-members cited that they will feel lonely when they attend any functions organized by the association as members as they do not know any friends there. This is an indication that social relationship among the Sam Sui Chinese is superficial. Many of the non-members said that if they were to meet a Sam Sui Chinese, they might not be able to gauge if he is a Sam Sui Chinese unless informed. This finding lends support to Freedman's (1957) observation that, 'locally born Chinese often have no or little knowledge of the village from which they originate and for them, as a result, the category of 'chirn-yen' (one's own kin) in this case based on one's district or province) from one localized lineage hardly exists'.

In the past, the Sam Sui Chinese sent their children to be educated in Chinese schools where Confucian notions of filial piety was taught to reinforce Chinese traditions and culture to safeguard the Chinese identity. However, recent changes in public education have caused many of the parents to send their children to schools where Bahasa Malaysia is the first language and the media of instruction.

The present policy is to make Bahasa Malaysia as the National Language and all curriculum are to be conducted in Bahasa Malaysia. By doing so, they hope that their children could have better chances of securing a job in the Government sector. Many of the Sam Sui Chinese parents sent their children to such schools. As a result, many of their children do not really appreciate SSWK.

Many non-members have negative attitude towards SSWK. The reason for this could be the process of assimilation that have taken place in the midst of the Sam Sui Chinese during the last few decades. These Chinese were exposed to a totally different culture when they first came here. So in the course of time, their ideas and points of view may have changed.

Traditions are not simply habits or survivals from the past. They have been continually manipulated to suit the present time. Thus, many of the traditions and beliefs of old had undergone changes to fit the needs of time. To date, the customs practised are far from the those held in the past. For example, the funeral rites. In the past, a corpse was kept in the funeral parlour for at least seven days. Before the funeral, the monk would sing hymns and perform rituals and services. Every move carried a meaning and these superstitions abound during the entire period of mourning. Every minute details were carried out to the dot. All these contributed to a costly affair. These rituals have now been set aside and 'service are reduced to minimum. This is

because most of the Sam Sui Chinese today do not believe in elaborate funeral services as performed in the manner that had been preserved since the early days which are no longer pleasant in the eyes of today's generation. A corpse is kept for only 3 days instead of 7 days. A monk is not hired if the family is poor.

Interclan marriages among the Chinese are now common day affairs. It was traditionally believed that when a girl marries, she is no longer a member of her own family but becomes a member of her husband's family. Exogamous marriage does in fact affect the Sam Sui Chinese decision as to whether they would be members or not.

Chinese today are exposed to other religions besides Taoism and Buddhism such as Christianity and Islam. It is interesting to note that six of the twenty-five non-member respondents interviewed are Christians. Principles and beliefs in the Christian religion differ very much with the teachings of Taoism and Buddhism, require children to pay filial piety to ancestors which culminates in ancestral worship. This among other factors do not encourage Chinese who are Christians to join the clan association.

b) Economic aspect

In the past, SSWK was important because the immigrants needed it to help adapt themselves to the environment in Malaysia. Jobs were sought through the association and finances and mutual aids were given. Any kind of help and services were rendered by SSWK but today most of

the Sam Sui Chinese are not immigrants but very much localised being born and bred here. They have values and attitudes which already been inculcated since birth that is in line with the society. The association is not needed to help them in this area. The younger generation are Malaysian by nationality although ethnically they are still Chinese.

The economic and social situation of most of the Sam Sui Chinese have improved a great deal in the past few years. As a result, they do not need to depend on the association for financial and mutual benefit aid. Eventually SSWK become unimportant to them in this aspect. SSWK have also stopped its provision for financial aids except for some funds from the Death Benefit Fund. This particular role of the association is now being performed by the Social Welfare Department. Most of the very poor Sam Sui Chinese are referred to this department instead and not to SSWK. This is particularly because SSWK does not have a strong financial base.

SSWK is poor compared to other Chinese voluntary association such as the Malacca HAHK, and its lack of finances is a disincentive for people to be members. The HAHK for instance is a very rich association in which most of the members are wealthy motor-shop owners. (See plate 16). Finance is not a problem at all as Heng Ann Huay Kuan owns rubber estates. They give financial loans to students (primary, secondary, and also tertiary level) and also to those who are in great financial need. The present findings indicate that not even one member of the

Heng Ann Huay Kuan is referred to the Social Welfare Department. Besides this, Heng Ann Huay Kuan also provides accommodation for members from the other state branches of Heng Ann Huay Kuan who come to Malacca for holidays, business or even for conferences. See Plate 17. In contrast SSWK does not even have a bed for the caretaker.

Plate 16: The Malacca Heng Ann Huay Kuan.



Plate 17: There are seven rooms of this kind in the building of the Heng Ann Huay Kuan for accomodation purpose.



Many of the non-members of SSWK admitted that they do not have the time to be involved in the activities of the association. They are either too busy with their work, business or families. To be involved in SSWK means commitment. Commitment is a serious act as one must be willing to sacrifice one's time, energy and money to serve the association. The non-members are not willing to do so with the excuse that they have other more important things to do. They said it is troublesome especially when there are deaths of fellow members because they need to pay homage at nights or attend the funeral. When one is a member and the association is in need of finance, one cannot just turn

a deaf ear to the plea. That is why, according to them, being the member, one not only needs to pay the registration and subscription fees but also be always ready to give donations and contributions to the association. The non-members cited that they do not have much money to contribute to SSWK eventhough they would like it. They said that they would rather be non-members and contribute a small sum like \$5 once in a while, rather than be members and contribute the same amount as in their opinion, it would be a disgraceful thing to give to little as a member.

c) Political aspect.

At its' initial stage SSWK used to fight for the rights of the Sam Sui Chinese especially during the British administration. At that time, many of them felt that to be a Chinese in Malaysia, they had to be affiliated with a particular group in the Chinese community. That is why SSWK played such an important role in their lives but presently this was changed. Initially the Chinese had the idea that they were only transient sojourners in Malaya. They wanted to gain wealth and then return to their homeland, China. This however cannot be applied to the locally born Chinese here anymore as they have become a settled population since independence in 1957. Few if any, have the intention of returning and settling in China. The fact that China does not welcome them due to its' practises of the jus soli principle should be reason enough for them to be loyal and trustworthy citizens of Malaysia. In a society like Malaysia where politics play an important role in the lives of its' people, SSWK is found to be more functional since it

is not politically affiliated.

Eventhough SSWK does preserve and rediscover elusive cultural traditions to a small extent, it divides the Chinese into different clan, dialect and surname groups instead of uniting them as one big community. With regards to this, many non-member respondents suggested that all the Chinese associations, be they clan or dialect or surname association be grouped together so that the Chinese can be a strong community. This had also been brought up in one of the meetings in SSWK i.e. to combine all the other Cantonese associations such as Ng Yip Association, Pun Yi Association, Sun Tak Association together with SSWK into one big Cantonese association- Kwangtung Association. However this was regarded as too time consuming and was met with disagreement by other associations. These, are the conservative and clannish association. This topic has this never been raised again.

From the conversation among themselves, it is evident that the Sam Sui Chinese are very keen in politics; members and non-members alike. Many of them are in the MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) party as they hope and believe that MCA can be an answer to welding all Chinese together into one community.

Through the process of Malaysianization many Chinese among the younger generation feels that they ought to be patriotic to

Malaysia rather than to China as they increasingly recognise Malaysia as their homeland. Many of them do not like to be members of Chinese clan associations as they think this would only cause them to hold closely to the beliefs and thoughts of China. There is a rapid decline in the membership in Chinese associations for the last few years for the lack of the incentive for those who are serious about doing something concrete in uniting the Chinese.

The leadership is also another factor as to why SSWK is no more as popular as before. Most of them are elderly people and they are not receptive to new ideas. The younger members would be frustrated at the way the elder folks run the association and at the way the excuses given for their suggestions being turned down. The elders felt that to accept them i.e. their suggestions to promote activities like having games and some classes such as Tai Chi, sewing classes etc would cost the association a large sum of money - in maintenance fees and the cost of paying teachers who are willing to instruct for there are only a few who would accept a small pay for their services. Many of the Sam Sui Chinese, members and non-members alike, questioned and doubted the progress of SSWK. With this kind of conservatism and narrow-mindedness among the committee members, many of the Sam Sui Chinese predicted that SSWK would collapse one day or remain static in its activities. Membership will definitely decrease since the association holds no appeal to them and no recruitment drive apart from fathers of the family who encourage their sons to be members.

From the survey sample of members, some fathers mentioned that they tried and encouraged their sons to be members but to no avail. They said that they can never and will never force this upon them.

Attitudes like this can lead to no initiative and before long nobody will be bothered as to what will happen to SSWK. It is believed that the younger generation hardly identify themselves with SSWK. One of the respondents (non-member) remarked that he is too ashamed to admit that SSWK is his clan association because of its poor condition. He always tries to avoid talking about clans and dialects so as to prevent unnecessary embarrassment. According to him, SSWK is a place for the old people only and the young can never have a part to play in it.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Sam Sui Chinese especially the younger generation do not have very high regard for SSWK. Many of them doubt the existence of the association in the future, saying that SSWK would never appeal to the future generation and therefore would not gain their support. Even if it does continue to exist, SSWK will only remain as a non-functional association and perhaps its centre as a historical building.

CHAPTER FIVE

The application of Kenneth Little's findings with regards to voluntary association in West Africa in the Malaysian context, i.e. SSWK in Malacca.

According to Kenneth Little, voluntary associations in West Africa were formed because of social changes, resulting from culture contact. Men and women migrated to towns and places with greener pastures with the hope that they could improve their living conditions. In the totally new environment, the associations would be the best adaptive mechanism in which the immigrants could have a 'home' away from their homeland. Likewise, when the Sam Sui Chinese first migrated to Malaysia, they had a very sophisticated and dogmatic culture. The new environment and society in Malaysia added to the main factors which hindered them from adapting themselves comfortably. Thus, SSWK was formed to fill the needs of the immigrants and to keep internal order. In other words, SSWK also played the role as an adaptive mechanism in its early beginnings where jobs were recommended by the association, kinsfolk kept in touch and traditional practices of families and lineages were preserved. The Sam Sui Chinese were better 'equipped' in the sense that there were people with similar conditions like them and that they were always in contact with those from Sam Sui (tung hiong). Thus, they did not feel out of place in such a totally strange and new environment and adaption did not become much of a problem.

However, with the passing of time, SSWK has ceased functioning as an adaptive mechanism. This is mainly because many Chinese, namely Sam Sui Chinese, in Malaysia today, especially the youths are local born. To them, Malaysia is their homeland. They are predominantly adapted to the Malaysian setting and thus have no need to be a member of SSWK to help them adapt themselves. Therefore, Kenneth Little's findings concerning voluntary associations in West Africa as adaptive mechanisms is only applicable to SSWK in its initial stages but does not hold when applied in the Malaysian context today.

The voluntary associations in West Africa have many functions such as providing members with mutual aid and support in times of financial difficulties, responsible for funerals and repatriation of the family of the deceased in the case of death, expanding education by offering scholarships for deserving boys and girls, helping members to save, for amusement and entertainment, etc. In this aspect, it cannot be denied that in the past SSWK also had similar functions to that of the voluntary association in West Africa. It was a source of comfort and moral and financial support to families of the deceased through the Death Benefit Fund of SSWK and by the presence of fellow members in funerals. SSWK was a contact point in which Sam Sui Chinese met together and preserved close-ties among themselves and also with their kinsfolk in China. It is a common practice for Chinese clan associations in Malaysia to offer scholarships for qualified and deserving students. SSWK is not an exception. SSWK started a scho-

larship fund in 1982. Despite the fact that SSWK cannot afford to sponsor schools, it can be assured that education will remain an important part of the association.

As the voluntary association in West Africa play an important role in the commercial field such as controlling supply, price of commodities and operate co-operatives, SSWK never undertook such a role. However, in the past, SSWK helped fellow members to obtain jobs. Today, this function is non-existent.

The voluntary association, namely the syncretist cult association performed rites and rituals according to their beliefs in the things of the spirits world. This can be related to the ancestral worship performed in SSWK. In the course of time, the rites and rituals of ancestral worship has also changed but the basic patterns of the worship practices still stand today.

Dancing, singing and games are the primary concern of the voluntary associations in Africa, namely, the entertainment and recreational association. In relating this aspect to SSWK, it can be said that in the early days of SSWK, there were classes for lion-dance, opera singing and tai chi lessons. Unfortunately, today, SSWK cannot afford to maintain such activities. Annual dinners and festival celebrations still remain as the important events of SSWK.

From the above evaluation, it can be concluded that to a certain degree there is a similarity in the functional aspect of the voluntary associations in West Africa and SSWK. Therefore, the findings of Kenneth Little regarding the voluntary association in West Africa is only relevant to a certain extent when applied to the Chinese clan association in the Malaysian context, namely the SSWK.

Summary and analysis

Being a Chinese Clan Association, SSWK has indeed certain traits of the voluntary associations especially in the functions and activities carried out such as organizing annual dinners and celebrations, performing ancestral worship rites and rituals and giving scholarships to students.

Basically, SSWK was formed to aid the Sam Sui Cantonese Chinese adapt themselves to the totally new environment when they first arrived in Malaya. Originally, SSWK acted as a bureau in which contacts were made between the immigrants and their kinsfolk and relatives. Mutual aids such as support, sympathy, financial assistance, funeral benefits and employments were made available by SSWK in the past. Besides such aid and activities, SSWK also provided recreation facilities for instance, organizing mahjong games, tai chi classes and opera singing classes. Through SSWK, the Sam Sui Chinese were united as one corporate body to participate in the politics of Malaysia, regulate disputes, meet the need for overt,

legal activities, regulate competition in the economic life and also to sponsor welfare activities.

Yang (1961:296) and Freedman (1974:40) observed that religion existed as a pervasive factor in all major aspects of Chinese social life and it cannot be denied that the Chinese beliefs contributed greatly to the stability of SSWK. The Sam Sui Chinese were integrated and closely knitted as one big family through their beliefs and also by the ancestral worship rites and rituals. In fact, this seems to be the fork for SSWK since its inception.

In tracing the development of SSWK, we could see that there are various socio-cultural factor that played major roles in the decline of the functions and activities of this association. The emergence of new bodies taking over the functions of SSWK is one distinct factor. In the initial stage of the Chinese immigration when the British administration was in operation, SSWK acted as an autonomous apparatus for social control but as Malaysia gained independence, the government has been increasingly involved in taking over this particular role of SSWK, via the law and court. Problem and daily disputes between employees and employers, between members of families of which include divorce and separation are now put into the hands of the court. The problem of unemployment which was once the concern of SSWK is today the concern of the Labour and Manpower Ministry. As for the social functions of SSWK like giving financial

aids and providing place for shelter to the sick and homeless have been taken by the Ministry of Social Welfare to a certain extent.

Setting up of other bodies, example youth club and social societies provides facilities catering to the social education and cultural needs of the Sam Sui Chinese. In comparing SSWK with these bodies, SSWK may seem defunct.

The financial position of SSWK also caused many of its functions such as tai chi classes, Chinese classical opera singing classes (yiut kok) and lion-dance troupe to be terminated. Consequently, SSWK lost its appeal to the Sam Sui Chinese today.

The present findings indicate that many of the Sam Sui Chinese younger generation are local born. To them, China is something distant as they have never known China first hand. They are not imbued with Chinese ideas and therefore, to them the names of their ancestral hometowns are of hollow significance. They would rather pay their loyalty to Malaysia and live their lives as Malaysians would. They identify themselves and Malaysian Chinese rather than Chinese from China. Surveys show that many of them do not know their place of origin in China. Events in Malaysia become their primary concern rather than happenings in China. The majority of them expressed their disinterest in going back to China because of the red tapes which they have to go through.

The education system too played an important role in the formation of a new kind of Malaysian attitude. They would rather be united as one big Chinese community than be divided into various clans as what is actually happening with the existence of so many clan associations. Many of them felt that living in a Malay country, the Chinese ought to be integrated as one and not be subdivided into various dialect group or surname group. This was the basis for the emergence of the Chinese political party MCA and also the Chinese dominated party DAP. (Democratic Action Party).

As the population of the Sam Sui Chinese increased, they become more conscious of self-achievement and self-betterment. They become materialistic and thus they want to pursue their own career and future. Eventually, SSWK lost its importance and appeal.

SSWK has been consistent over the years both in the past and present of retaining their basic objectives in maintaining clan identity and providing welfare services in a smaller scale to their members. However, many of the functions have become obsolete - on the whole, it have declined in various activities and also declined over the years in terms of size of membership. In the aspect of retaining the clan identity, the Malaysian policies today emphasis on national unity which encourage the intermingling of the three main ethnic groups namely Chinese, Malays and Indians. On the other

hand, SSWK encourages clannish identity. Thus, there exist a conflict. However, it is evident that the Sam Sui Chinese attitude is in support of the Government's policy.

of the association in so far as the preservation of the race is concerned. Otherwise, SSWK would just be as dead as it is now or may even collapse in time to come.

For a few decades, SSWK have met the needs of the Sam Sui community and of individuals with services outlined earlier and also provided a means to acquire and to exercise power and influence and - so important to the Sam Sui community - to develop and preserve their own self-image, their Chineseness. Judging from the circumstances faced by SSWK today, there is no doubt that it has very little opportunity to make further progress in the near future unless some changes are made. The future of SSWK is of crucial concern for all Sam Sui Chinese; though it is not popular among them because the closing down of SSWK means the end of the identification of the Sam Sui Chinese.

I feel that SSWK ought to continue its existence as an association so that the future generation of the Sam Sui Chinese would know their roots and their culture. The very existence of SSWK allows them a sense of identity of belonging even though they may go through the process of assimilation and acculturation. However, SSWK would have to make

radical changes in its objectives and activities if it wants to attract the larger proportion of the Sam Sui Chinese. Such a task involves many adjustments which may go against the basic principles of the association in so far as the preservation of the clan is concerned. Otherwise, SSWK would just be as dead as it is now or may even collapse in time to come.

At this juncture, the most important thing to do is to recruit more new and young members; members who have the zeal and energy, who dare to make a stand to change the present situation and who are willing to put much time, effort and money for the progress and improvement of SSWK. The present members should be encouraged and inspired to reach out to their fellow Sam Sui Cantonese Chinese clansmen and invite them to join SSWK as members. Incentives could be given as an encouragement to them; in the form of starting a competition - those who are able to recruit more than three members would have their names and photographs inscribed in the life-history of SSWK. When the number of members increased, creative ideas and plans would follow suit provided that the committee is willing to give and take the suggestions brought out.

Secondly, the committee has to change their mentality and way of looking at things if they really desire to see SSWK flourish. They must not be too conservative and short-sighted. They ought to be willing to listen to ideas of younger members and weigh them

one by one before brushing them off as not practical. As long as they are willing to give and take, I am sure SSWK will prosper very soon. SSWK can organise inter-state SSWK competition such as basketball, badminton, table-tennis and football tournament. They can also hold leadership seminar-conference or retreat in a holiday site. Finance would not be an obstacle as there are Sam Sui Chinese who are prepared to slog together. Projects like collecting donations, holding a food and fun fair, selling products for fund raising would draw in cash quite quickly.

The SSWK building should be opened from morning till night, or at least from 9am-5pm. Lights should be on and a new coat of paint would brighten up the place and make the people feel welcomed. The very old tables and chairs can either be painted or sold away and new sets be purchased. This would attract people to come. Functions like marriage dinners and social gatherings can once again be activated in the association. The face lift given to the SSWK buildings can induce the Sam Sui Chinese to be proud of their association.

All these changes require a big sum of money but it would be impossible if every member is not serious about the whole matter. However, there is another alternative. It is not something new - to combine all the Chinese clan associations into one big Chinese clan association. This suggestion has been brought forward before

but nothing serious was done about it because the richer clan associations refuse to join resources and effort with other poorer ones. This kind of selfish attitude has to be rid off before unity among the Chinese can be formed. The main objective of such association would be geared towards the importance and integration of the Chinese community; dialects and place of origin have to be put aside. This is more appropriate for Malaysian Chinese. Forming an association for all Chinese does not necessarily mean that SSWK be dissolved. SSWK can still continue to exist and function with regards to the main Chinese clan association. All funds collected, projects organized and plans ought to be for the good and welfare of the Chinese society.

Ancestral worship and religious activities should not be the highlight of the association as they will only hinder Chinese Christians from joining the association. Although such kind of rituals and rites would implant in the next few generations as increased knowledge of and identification with the Chinese culture, they can also hinder them from pursuing other aspects of Chinese culture and traditions. Thus, they ought to be practiced in a low profile so that those who do not believe in them do not have to feel guilty or left out.

Another problem that most likely will arise combining all Chinese clan associations is the language barrier. So, the

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best way to solve it is to make Mandarin or 'kuo yu' the medium of communication since all Chinese schools in Malaysia use Mandarin as the medium of instruction.

Source: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

If all the above steps are taken, I believe the Sam Sui Chinese community will be able to preserve their traditional values and maintain the Chinese identity.

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